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French agents embroiled in Auckland bombing

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PARIS — At least six persons working for the French equivalent of the CIA appear to have been involved in the July 10 blowing-up in New Zealand's Auckland harbor of the "Rainbow Warrior," a trawler belonging to the anti-nuclear group Greenpeace.

Two of them — claiming to be a Swiss couple named Alain-Jacques and Sylvie-Clair Turenge — are now in the custody of the New Zealand police, charged with involvement in the crippling of the ship and of being indirectly responsible for the death of the crew's Portuguese photographer, Fernando Pereira, who was killed by the second of two underwater blasts which blew holes in the trawler's hull and caused it to tilt over on its side.

Little is known about the real identity of Alain-Jacques Turenge, supposedly aged 34 and claiming to be a Swiss businessman on vacation. But his companion, who had been described as a schoolteacher, has now been identified by several French newspapers as holding the rank of captain in the French secret service.

Four other French undercover agents who set sail from the New Caledonian port of Noumea in mid-June and anchored off the New Zealand coast a day or two before the bombing, have been identified as being Alain Velche, the skipper; Eric Audrenc, Jean-Michel Berthelot; and Dr. Xavier Maniguet.

The first three have disappeared, along with their yacht, "Ouvea," which they hired in Noumea in June and fitted out with sophisticated radio gear for long-distance satellite communications.

Dr. Maniguet, who left the yacht during a stopover at the Australian port of Norfolk on July 17, recently returned to his home in the channel seaport of Dieppe. In a terse televised interview, he claimed to have no knowledge whatsoever of the James Bond-style underwater bombing operation, and to escape further journalistic harassment he, too, has momentarily gone underground, leaving a tape-recording answering-machine to take incoming telephone queries.

A seventh suspect has now been named: a woman in her late twenties calling herself Frederique Beaulieu. A French sea captain named Jean-Marc Vidal, a supporter of the "Greenpeace" ecological movement who sailed to the South Pacific in 1983 to protest further holding of nuclear bomb tests on the French atoll of Mururoa, says that he was twice approached by Miss Beaulieu, the second time in January of this year.

Saying she was a "geographer" and personally opposed to French nuclear tests, she asked for introductions to members of the "Greenpeace" movement active in the South Pacific. Her real intention, it is now believed, was to infiltrate the Greenpeace movement as a kind of "mole."

The fact that she first approached Jean-Marc Vidal more than a year ago suggests that she was acting under orders as part of a long-range plan. This fits in with a report that the "Rainbow Warrior" bombing attack, far from being an isolated incident, was in fact the 10th attempt in a series of "accidental" explosions that have damaged Greenpeace vessels in recent months.

To date, the most sensational revelation is one appearing in the current edition of the weekly Le Point. The anti-Rainbow Warrior operation, the magazine claims, was carried out under the direct orders of Gen. Roger Emin, who heads the "action" service of the DGSE (Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur), as the French counterpart of the CIA is called.

The question is just how high the chain of responsibility goes in this affair. It is regarded as inconceivable that an operation of this kind could have been authorized without the knowledge of Adm. Pierre LaCoste, current head of the DGSE. If Adm. LaCoste knew, it is equally inconceivable that he should not have informed his immediate superior, Defense Minister Charles Hernu.

The French defense minister has already manifested his embarrassment by canceling a trip he was to have made to India, supposedly on the grounds that his presence is needed in Paris to put the finishing touch to France's response to an offer being made by Britain, West Germany, and Italy to cooperate on joint production of an ultra-modern European fighter plane.